



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

Appalachian
Ranger District

19-E By-Pass
P. O. Box 128
Burnsville, NC 28714

File Code: 1950

Date: February 22, 2002

Enclosed is a copy of the Draft Environmental Assessment (DEA) for a proposed timber sale and associated activities on the Appalachian Ranger District. This project initially went through the public scoping process in 1999 and 2000. A decision was signed in June of 2000 but was withdrawn due to ongoing litigation in the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Georgia. Because this litigation concerned issues that were region wide in scope, I decided to withdraw my decision until additional regional direction was established on these issues.

The DEA has been rewritten with several changes. Changes include but are not limited to: one of the units in the original proposal was killed by Southern Pine Beetle, portions of units were dropped from the treatment areas, and an additional alternative has been evaluated. Proposed activity areas are located in the Flattop area of Yancey County, North Carolina. Four alternatives were evaluated and analyzed in detail in the DEA and Alternative 4 has been identified as the preferred alternative.

Alternative 4 proposes timber harvesting (49 acres), herbicide site preparation (53 acres), supplemental planting of northern red oak (40 acres), manual grapevine control (6 acres), prescribed burning (35 acres), and manual release of butternut trees.

No new road construction or reconstruction is proposed with this project. Approximately one mile of skid roads would be needed to access the units.

A copy of the Biological Evaluation is included with the DEA. Copies of the Aquatic Analysis, Botanical Analysis, and Wildlife Analysis, can be viewed at the National Forests in North Carolina website (www.cs.unca.edu/nfsnc) or copies will be mailed upon request.

Although a preferred alternative has been identified, the final decision on which alternative to implement has not been made. You are invited to provide written comments on the DEA to the following address: USDA Forest Service, P.O. Box 128, Burnsville, NC 28714. Comments must be post marked by March 27, 2002.

I appreciate your continued interest in the management of our National Forests. If you have any questions regarding this proposal, please contact Karen Compton or me at the office in Burnsville at (828) 682-6146.

Sincerely,

/s/ Paul L. Bradley

PAUL L. BRADLEY
District Ranger

Enclosure

